

The Cleveland Museum of Art

Wari: Lords of the Ancient Andes Opens October 28

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Friday, October 12, 2012

Caroline Guscott

The Cleveland Museum of Art
cguscott@clevelandart.org
(216) 707-2261

First North American exhibition to explore the Wari, an ancient Peruvian empire that predates the Inca

CLEVELAND (October 12, 2012) – The Cleveland Museum of Art presents *Wari: Lords of the Ancient Andes*, the first North American exhibition to explore the art of the Wari, a cosmopolitan society that existed in the Andes Mountains of Peru between 600 and 1000 AD and is widely regarded today as ancient Peru's first empire. The groundbreaking exhibition examines this relatively unknown episode in ancient South American history through 150 masterful artworks representing a variety of Wari media. Organized and presented by the Cleveland Museum of Art, *Wari: Lords of the Ancient Andes* will be on view from October 28, 2012 through January 6, 2013. The exhibition will travel to Museum of Art | Fort Lauderdale and the Kimbell Art Museum in Fort Worth, Texas.

"This exhibition exemplifies the museum's commitment to original scholarship and exploring all areas of its renowned comprehensive collection," said David Franklin, the Sarah S. and Alexander M. Cutler director of the Cleveland Museum of Art. "We're excited to share these rare objects, most gathered together for the first time, with the Northeast Ohio community and beyond."

Visitors to *Wari: Lords of the Ancient Andes* will learn that the history of South American civilization long predates the more well-known Inca of the 15th and 16th centuries, and that artwork is crucial to understanding early human endeavors in this hemisphere. Like other ancient Andean people, the Wari did not develop a writing system and used works of art, including elaborate textiles, as vehicles to communicate their ideas about the human, natural and supernatural realms. The exhibition is organized thematically and focuses on some of the mechanisms that the Wari used to build and maintain a complex society. For instance, Wari elites seem to have hosted lavish feasts and beer-drinking events that involved finely made ceramics decorated with images of important Wari deities, among other things. Such events likely helped the Wari to forge alliances with important guests.

Wari: Lords of the Ancient Andes contains superior examples of Wari artwork selected from more than forty public and private collections in Canada, Europe, Peru and the United States, including the Ethnologisches Museum in Berlin, Lima's Museo Nacional de Antropología, Arqueología e Historia in

Lima, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and The Textile Museum in Washington, D.C. All major Wari media are represented in this comprehensive exhibition: ceramics; ornaments made of precious inlays or of gold and silver; small stone and wood sculptures; and intricately woven textiles that are among the finest ever made in the Andean region. The objects are of the highest aesthetic quality and cultural significance, and many have never or only rarely been seen outside of the countries where they now reside.

The remarkable artistic and cultural accomplishments of the Wari haven't received the attention that they deserve," stated Susan E. Bergh, the exhibition organizer and curator of Pre-Columbian and Native North American art at the Cleveland Museum of Art. "I'm delighted to be part of the effort to introduce this important ancient American civilization to U.S. audiences."

Highlights of Wari: Lords of the Ancient Andes include:

Bag with Human Face, 600–1000. Acquired recently by the Cleveland Museum of Art, this bag is made from animal hide, an ancient Andean artistic medium that is now rare due to the poor survival of this material in an extreme climate. The bag flares into a decorated panel to which a three-dimensional lifelike human face, made of hardened hide, is stitched. The youthful face, which may represent an individual or a social group, is compelling: the gaze is direct and candid and the lips part slightly, as though in speech. Still-lustrous tresses of human hair fall from beneath a cap.

Figure Pendant, 600–1000. Many Wari personal ornaments are made of intricate, brightly colored mosaics attached with a resinous adhesive to a variety of media. This rare figure from the Kimbell Museum of Art in Fort Worth is pierced for suspension, perhaps from a necklace. The figure's garment seems to represent a tapestry-woven tunic that, together with the large, circular ear ornaments, identifies the figure as an elite male. Materials range from the silver of the headdress to colored stones such as lapis lazuli and shells, including *Spondylus* oyster shell that had great ritual and economic value.

Panel, probably a Hanging, from Corral Redondo, 600–1000. Textiles covered with brilliant feathers of rain forest birds are among the most striking works created by artists in Pre-Columbian Peru. This large panel, from the collection of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, is made of the feathers of the blue-and-yellow macaw and was found in an impressive buried offering that may have commemorated either an elite Wari burial or an important human sacrifice. It is one of 96 similar panels from the offering site.

Tapestry-Woven Tunic with Staff-Bearing Creature in Profile, 600–1000. Wari tapestry-woven tunics are known for their beauty and artistic complexity. In antiquity, they were forms of wealth and prestige, serving as the attire of elite Wari men, including rulers. This exquisite, sleeved tunic from the Brooklyn Museum, however, is a miniature that probably had devotional purposes. It is exceptionally finely woven with the image of a supernatural creature whose features mingle human and animal traits.

Urn with Staff Deities, 600–1000. This large vessel, from the Museo Nacional de Antropología, Arqueología e Historia in Lima, may have been used to serve lavish feasts that the Wari hosted in order to establish alliances with elite guests. The interior and exterior of the urn are painted with

images of the deity who was the focus of Wari state religion. Appendages radiate from the head and both hands hold a staff, a powerful symbol of both divine and human authority. The urn was reconstructed from fragments found in a three-ton offering of ceramic vessels that were deliberately shattered and buried in antiquity.

Warrior Plaque, 600–1000. Among Wari ornaments are impressive fine metal plaques that originally may have been mounted on a backing of some kind, such as a textile. This plaque from the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston takes the shape of a sumo-like warrior who carries an axe and rectangular shield. This warrior's high status is indicated by silver from which he is made and the elite garments that he wears: a four-cornered hat and a tie-dyed tunic covered with interlocked hooks.

Wari: Lords of the Ancient Andes is a free exhibition, made possible by Hahn Loeser & Parks, LLP. Complementary exhibition programming includes lectures, weaving demonstrations and workshops, and a fashion competition that culminates in a runway show. On Sunday, October 28 from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. the museum will celebrate the official opening of the Ames Family Atrium, a significant milestone in the museum's multi-year renovation and expansion project, with a day of festivities. The day also marks the first time visitors will have a chance to see *Wari: Lords of the Ancient Andes*. A true community celebration, over 40 groups representing different cultures in Cleveland will set up displays showcasing their culture. Music and dance groups will perform throughout the event, including the internationally acclaimed Inca Son, a group of musicians and dancers from Peru. Alpacas from a nearby breeder will greet visitors as they arrive at the museum. More programming information will be available at clevelandart.org closer to the opening of the exhibition.

Wari: Lords of the Ancient Andes is accompanied by a nearly 300-page catalogue edited by Susan E. Bergh. The catalogue is comprised of scholarly essays by fourteen of the world's leading Wari experts, who examine a range of topics, including archaeological perspectives on the Wari; feasting and its significance; Wari architecture and agricultural projects; religion and cosmology; and individual essays on all major Wari art forms, including textiles, ceramics, featherwork and mosaic and metal ornaments. The catalogue is the most comprehensive and richly illustrated publication available on Wari arts and constitutes a major scholarly contribution to the field. The catalogue, available in hardback and paperback, is published by the Cleveland Museum of Art and Thames & Hudson, and contains over 160 color illustrations.

Wari: Lords of the Ancient Andes is organized by the Cleveland Museum of Art. The exhibition is sponsored by Hahn Loeser & Parks LLP. *Wari* has been made possible in part by the National Endowment for the Humanities: Exploring the human endeavor. This exhibition is supported by an indemnity from the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities. Support for exhibition programming has been provided in part by Georgia and Michael DeHavenon and by the Ohio Humanities Council, a state affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities. Research for this exhibition was supported by a Curatorial Research Fellowship from the Getty Foundation.

###

About the Cleveland Museum of Art

The Cleveland Museum of Art is renowned for the quality and breadth of its collection, which includes more than 63,000 artworks and spans 6,000 years of achievement in the arts. The museum is a significant international forum for exhibitions, scholarship and performing arts and is a leader in digital innovations. One of the top comprehensive art museums in the nation, recognized for its award-winning Open Access program and free of charge to all, the Cleveland Museum of Art is located in the University Circle neighborhood.

The museum is supported in part by residents of Cuyahoga County through a public grant from Cuyahoga Arts & Culture and made possible in part by the Ohio Arts Council (OAC), which receives support from the State of Ohio and the National Endowment for the Arts. The OAC is a state agency that funds and supports quality arts experiences to strengthen Ohio communities culturally, educationally and economically. For more information about the museum and its holdings, programs and events, call 888-CMA-0033 or visit cma.org [1].

Wari: Lords of the Ancient Andes [2]

Press Announcements [3]

Source URL: <https://www.clevelandart.org/about/press/wari-lords-ancient-andes-opens-october-28>

Links

[1] <https://www.clevelandart.org>

[2] <https://www.clevelandart.org/exhibitions/wari-lords-ancient-andes>

[3] <https://www.clevelandart.org/about/press/media-kit>